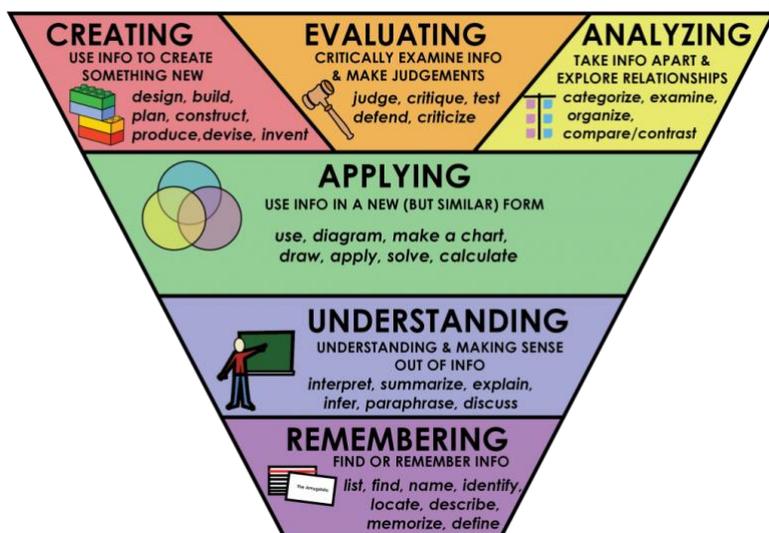


Preparing for Open Book Exams

Open book exams ask you to integrate information from the course into well-structured answers, while allowing you to access your course texts, notes, and other resources during the test period. In this Learning Aid, you will develop strategies to prepare for and write open book exams.

What to expect

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY



Your instructor is unlikely to ask questions that require you to simply copy basic information from course resources. Instead, you will be answering “big picture” questions that ask you analyze and apply concepts.

Bloom’s Taxonomy (see the image on the left) provides a way of preparing your study approach for take-home exams.

While you need to remember and understand basic course concepts (the foundation levels), take-home exams are more likely to work at the higher levels of the taxonomy (applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating).

You may be asked to solve case studies or apply principles you have learned to new scenarios.

How to prepare

Exam preparation for take-home exams is similar to what you would do for an in-person exam. However carefully preparing materials can help you effectively access them during your take-home exam:

1. Create your own notes and study guides. Resources such as summaries in your own words, charts, and diagrams will help you to access key concepts quickly. In the exam situation, you will not likely have time to re-read the text.
2. Use sticky notes or tabs to mark key concepts in your course materials so you can find them quickly.
3. If your exam requires problem solving, create a study sheet with key formulae.
4. Create study questions. Begin by looking at course and chapter objectives. Make your own questions using the key words from Bloom’s taxonomy above (for example: apply, evaluate, compare/contrast, synthesize ideas, or solve a case study problem). You may want to share questions with members of a study group. Refer to the [Four Levels of Questioning Learning Aid](#) for additional ideas.

Tips for writing the exam

Open-book exams may require a paragraph or essay length response. Here are some strategies for approaching these questions:

1. Read the whole exam first. If you have a choice of questions, identify the questions that you are best able to answer.
2. Make a point-form outline of your answer before you begin to write. This will help you formulate the kind of well-organized answer your instructor will be looking for.
3. Write what you know first, and use your materials to reference details or supporting information.

By studying course concepts well and organizing your materials you will be well-prepared for your exam.

Reference: Adapted from Simon Fraser University Student Learning Commons, & Silverman, R. (2018, October 15). *Exam preparation: Strategies for open book exams*. <https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc/learning/exam-types/open-book-exams>

